

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
/066 W

-----043121 132121Z /66

P R 131610Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3539
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL PALERMO
AMCONSUL TRIESTE
AMCONSUL TURIN

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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJ: RESULTS OF REFERENDA VOTE

REF: ROME 10563

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE JUNE 11-12 REFERENDUM VOTE RESULTED
IN THE DEFEAT OF THE PROPOSAL TO ABROGATE THE REALE LAW
AND THE LAW ON PUBLIC FINANCING OF POLITICAL PARTIES,
DESPITE A SURPRISINGLY LARGE VOTE IN FAVOR OF ABROGATION
OF THE LATTER. THE RESULT IS NOT EXPECTED TO DESTABILIZE
THE PRESENT GOVERNING ARRANGEMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. THE RESULTS. THE RESULTS OF THE JUNE 11-12 REFERENDUM
VOTE ARE AS FOLLOWS (PERCENTAGES):

YES NO

REALE LAW 23.3 76.7

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PARTY FINANCING 43.7 56.3

THERE WAS A REMARKABLE REGIONAL DISPARITY IN THE RESULTS:

NORTH

REALE LAW 20.2 79.8

PARTY FINANCING 39.9 60.1

CENTRAL

REALE LAW 20.8 79.2

PARTY FINANCING 40.3 59.2

SOUTH

REALE LAW 29.2 70.8

PARTY FINANCING 51.6 48.5

ISLANDS

REALE LAW 32.3 67.7

PARTY FINANCING 54.8 45.2

IT IS ALSO NOTABLE THAT IN THE LARGE CITIES THE "YES"

VOTE WAS ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE:

ROME

REALE LAW 26.6 73.4

PARTY FINANCING 53.5 46.5

MILAN

REALE LAW 22.3 77.7

PARTY FINANCING 44.1 55.9

NAPLES

REALE LAW 29.3 70.7

PARTY FINANCING 55.8 44.2

THE VOTING WAS THE LIGHTEST OF ANY NATIONAL ELECTION

OR REFERENDUM TO DATE BUT STILL A RESPECTABLE 81.4 PERCENT

(10-12 PERCENT LESS THAN THE NORMAL NATIONAL VOTE).

2. THE REACTION. THE PREVAILING REACTION IS THAT THE
OUTCOME OF THE VOTE LEAVES THE PRESENT GOVERNING
ARRANGEMENT AND THE STABILITY OF THE ANDREOTTI GOVERN-
MENT BASICALLY UNAFFECTED. THE PRIME MINISTER
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HIMSELF REMARKED "THE RESULT GIVES FOOD FOR THOUGHT.
HOWEVER, WHAT COUNTS IN REALITY IS THE OVERALL RESULT,
THE FACT THAT THE TWO LAWS HAVE BEEN CONFIRMED BY THE
ELECTORATE." THE GOVERNING ARRANGEMENT, ANDREOTTI
CONCLUDED, "EMERGES NEITHER STRENGTHENED NOR WEAKENED."
SPEAKING FOR THE DC, NICE SECRETARY GALLONI EXPRESSED
SATISFACTION THAT 80 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE SUPPORTED THE
REALE LAW AND A MAJORITY, PUBLIC FINANCING OF PARTIES.
COMMUNIST PARTY SECRETARY BERLINGUER COMMENTED, "WE
ASSESS THE RESULTS FAVORABLY." HE SAID THAT THE
VICTORY OF THE NO VOTE FOR THE REALE LAW WAS
PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT AND THAT THE YES VOTE ROUGHLY
CORRESPONDED TO THE INFLUENCE OF THE PARTIES, GROUPS
AND PERSONS THAT HAD FAVORED ABROGATING THE LAW.
REGARDING THE VOTE ON PARTY FUNDING, BERLINGUER ADDED
THAT THE LARGE SUPPORT FOR ABROGATION STEMMED FROM
POPULAR DISCONTENT OVER THE CONDUCT OF CERTAIN PARTIES,
CONDUCT WHICH THE COMMUNIST PARTY HAD LONG FOUGHT WITH
THE GREATEST DETERMINATION. FINALLY BERLINGUER OBSERVED
THAT HIS PARTY HAD CONTRIBUTED SIGNIFICANTLY IN THE
REJECTION OF "AN INSIDIOUS ATTACK AGAINST OUR DEMOCRATIC
SYSTEM," CLAIMING THAT THE GREATEST OPPOSITION TO THE

REFERENDA WAS IN COMMUNIST STRONGHOLDS. FOR THE SOCIALIST PARTY VICE SECRETARY SIGNORILE SAID, "THE RETURNS OF THE VOTE SHOW THAT THE PLURALISM OF OUR SOCIETY AND ITS VARIOUS OPINIONS CANNOT BE MECHANICALLY RELATED TO PARTY BEHAVIOR." REPUBLICAN PARTY SECRETARY BIASINI MAINTAINED THAT THE OUTCOME WAS "AN UTTER DEFEAT FOR THOSE WHO SUPPORTED THE ABROGATION OF THE REALE LAW." REGARDING PARTY FINANCING, HE SAID THE PUBLIC STILL "REMEMBERS SOME SENSATIONAL SCANDALS." THE RADICALS CONSIDERED THE VOTE ABOVE ALL A SETBACK FOR THE COMMUNIST; PARTY SECRETARY SPADACCIA CLAIMED THAT OF THE VOTE AGAINST THE REALE LAW "AT LEAST 15 PERCENT WERE COMMUNIST AND SOCIALIST."

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3. COMMENT: THESE REFERENDA DID NOT EXCITE WIDESPREAD PUBLIC INTEREST AND CONTROVERSY AS EARLIER REFERENDA ON THE MONARCHY AND DIVORCE DID. IN PART BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF PUBLIC INTEREST AND IN PART BECAUSE NO MAJOR GROUP SUPPORTED THE REFERENDA, THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN WAS ONE OF THE QUIETEST IN RECENT MEMORY IN ITALY. THE RESULTS ARE SUCH THAT EVERY PARTY CAN CLAIM A VICTORY: THE RADICALS (1 PERCENT IN PARLIAMENT) BECAUSE OF THE LARGE VOTE AGAINST PUBLIC FINANCING OF POLITICAL PARTIES, AND THE OTHERS BECAUSE THE ELECTORATE DEFEATED THE REFERENDA

AND BY A WIDE MARGIN ON THE LEGGE REALE ONE.

4. THE PARTIES THAT OPPOSED THE REFERENDA HAVE 90 PERCENT OF THE SEATS IN PARLIAMENT AND, TO EXTENT THAT THERE WAS A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN ON THE REFERENDA, THEY DOMINATED IT. IT IS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE HOW THE ELECTORATES OF THESE FIVE PARTIES VOTED, BUT IT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IS CLEAR FROM VOTING PATTERNS IN THE 'RED BELT' THAT THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S ELECTORATE THERE HELD TOGETHER ON THE LEGGE REALE REFERENDUM, THE MOST POLITICAL OF THE TWO. OVERALL ON THE LEGGE REALE, THE RESULT CANNOT BE A SERIOUS DISAPPOINTMENT TO THE FIVE PARTIES OF THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY, ALTHOUGH WITH 23 PERCENT VOTING AGAINST THE LAW THERE WAS SOME FLAKING AT THE EDGES OF THE ELECTORATE OF SEVERAL OF THE PARTIES, PERHAPS PARTICULARLY THE PSI SINCE IT INVITED ITS VOTERS TO EXERCISE THEIR OWN JUDGEMENT.

5. WITH REGARD TO THE LAW ON PUBLIC FINANCING OF POLITICAL PARTIES, THE VOTE AGAINST SUCH FINANCING WAS SURPRISINGLY LARGE (43 PERCENT). THIS RESULT WAS PROBABLY DUE TO THE FACT THAT IT WAS A SPENDING MEASURE AND THAT THE MONEY GOES TO THE POLITICIANS WHO HAVE SELDOM HAD A FAVORABLE PUBLIC IMAGE, AND WHOLE IMAGE HAS RECENTLY BEEN TARNISHED BY MULTIPLE SCANDALS. THE VOTE AGAINST PUBLIC FINANCING WAS STRONGEST IN THE POOREST AREAS OF THE COUNTRY (THE CENTER AND SOUTH) AND, LESS EXPLICITLY, IN SOME OF THE MAJOR CITIES (TURIN, ROME, NAPLES, GENOA).

6. POLITICALLY, THE RESULTS OF THE REFERENDA ARE UNLIKELY TO HAVE ANY VISIBLE EFFECT. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE ANY COORDINATION WITH OR CONTINUATION OF THE PATTERN SHOWN IN THE MAY 14 AND SUBSEQUENT SICILIAN LOCAL ELECTIONS. THE REFERENDA ARE NOT LIKELY TO HAVE ANY EFFECT ON THE POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS IN PARLIAMENT. AS PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI SAID, THE GOVERNMENT IS NEITHER WEAKER NOR STRONGER AS A RESULT OF THE ELECTIONS. THE PARTIES OF THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY ARE NOT LIKELY TO HEED THE ANTI-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PUBLIC SPENDING SENTIMENT EXPRESSED BY THE SUBSTANTIAL VOTE AGAINST PUBLIC FINANCING OF POLITICAL PARTIES. HOLMES

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